

## LESSON 3: **Ash and Birchbark: The As and Bs of Traditional Baskets**

### OBJECTIVES:

To understand that:

- Passamaquoddy people have a long history of basketmaking, first for personal use, then for sale in the marketplace.
- Many basketmakers use traditional natural materials, such as brown ash, sweetgrass and birchbark.
- Today, Passamaquoddy and other Wabanaki people make three distinct types of traditional baskets: fancy baskets, work baskets, and birchbark baskets.

### ALIGNMENT WITH THE MAINE STATE LEARNING RESULTS:

#### **SOCIAL STUDIES:**

##### **Geography, Human Interaction with Environments**

1. Explain how cultures differ in their use of similar environments and resources.

#### **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS:**

##### **Cultural Heritage**

1. Identify how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) are reflected in visual and performing arts.

### OVERVIEW:

Using the research materials provided, students will examine three types of traditional Wabanaki baskets. Students will learn the basics of basket shapes, weaves, materials and functions.



**TIME REQUIRED:** 1 hour

### MATERIALS:

- *Basket Research* reproducible worksheets (2)
- *Parts of a Basket* and *Basket Weave* laminated pages
- *Classroom Basket Worksheet*: (for Teacher use)
- Fancy, birchbark, and work baskets
- Samples of basketry materials: ash strips, sweetgrass braid, piece of birchbark (located in **Resource Bag**)
- Pencils
- Large Writing Surface (chalkboard, whiteboard, butcher paper)
- Photos of *Minnie Fouts* and *Moccasins made by Minnie Fouts* (optional assessment)

### PREPARATION:

1. *Basket Research* worksheets (2): Make one copy for each pair of students.
2. Gather *Parts of a Basket* and *Basket Weaves* laminated reference pages, baskets and samples of basketry materials for easy distribution.

### INTRODUCTION:

Passamaquoddy people have been making and selling baskets for centuries. Over time, styles and functional forms of baskets changed. The earliest recorded containers included birchbark baskets and twine woven bags. At some point, Native people began to weave sturdy ash baskets for their own use and for sale.

By the late 1800s, the Passamaquoddy were producing baskets for sale to both the summer tourists and local industries. They created and sold a wide variety of fancy baskets to the wealthy Victorian tourists of the time. These types of baskets were small, easy to transport, colorful and highly decorated with complicated weaves or sweetgrass. At the same time, Passamaquoddy people were making and selling sturdy, plain work baskets to local sardine canneries. Passamaquoddy and other Wabanaki people still craft and sell these traditional baskets today.

In this activity, students will research three types of baskets. These baskets represent the kinds of baskets that Wabanaki people were making in the late 1800s and that Passamaquoddy and other Wabanaki people still make versions of today. Each individual student will share information about his/her basket with the rest of the class.

### PROCEDURE:

1. Divide the class into three groups and then pair students within the groups.
2. Distribute to each group:
  - *Basket Research* worksheets: one copy for each pair in the group
  - 1 *Parts of a Basket* and 4 *Basket Weaves* laminated reference pages
  - 1 Basket
3. Give students 15-20 minutes to answer the questions on the worksheet within their group, using the laminated reference pages and sample basketry materials when needed. Each pair should record their answers on their worksheet.
4. During this time, the teacher should outline the *Classroom Basket Research* worksheet on the board, so that keypoints can be recorded for the entire class during class discussion.
5. When everyone is done, have each group report out to the class about their basket. During the report, pass the basket around the class for students to handle. The teacher should record notes on the board for each section of the *Classroom Basket Research* worksheet.
6. The teacher and class should verify that the information reported is accurate (ie., type of weave, material, etc.) using the laminated reference pages.

### ASSESSMENT:

Have students compare one of the Passamaquoddy baskets to a pair of moccasins made by Minnie Fouts, Delaware Tribe of Oklahoma (a photo of Minnie Fouts and the moccasins is included). Students should explain how and why they are different.